

COVER STORY

May gets frosty welcome home as half of voters want her to quit early

By Rob Merrick

Theresa May returns from her holiday today to a hostile populace, according to a poll.

Almost half of the public believes the Prime Minister should quit before the next scheduled general election in 2022, as dissatisfaction with her leadership remains high.

Only 29 per cent of people surveyed in a poll for *The Independent* want her to stay in power for the whole parliament – compared with the 48 per

cent who want her to resign early, the poll by BMG Research found.

And 58 per cent said they were unhappy with her leadership, with 42 per cent satisfied, giving her a personal rating of minus 16 – compared with plus 12 when she called the June election.

Jeremy Corbyn remains more popular to be the next Prime Minister, but only by a slender margin of 33 per cent to Mrs May's 32 per cent.

The results are revealed as the Prime Minister returns from a three-

week break under pressure from some Tories to set herself a departure date – and with key members of the Cabinet “on manoeuvres” to shift Brexit policy.

In her absence, Downing Street has attempted to hold the line that “nothing has changed” – that the hardline aims for the EU talks remain as they were set out in Mrs May's Lancaster House speech in January.

But Philip Hammond, the Chancellor, has broken ranks to argue publicly for an “off-the-shelf” transitional deal

for up to three years, which would effectively delay full withdrawal.

The BMG Research shows that Mr Corbyn is more popular with the public than Mrs May, with 51 per cent satisfied with his performance and 49 per cent unhappy.

However, the Conservatives have bounced back in the head-to-head between the parties to enjoy a three-point lead in voting intention by 42 per cent to 39 per cent.

And, in a further boost to Mrs May's chances of survival, a staggering 56 per cent of the public refuses to back any of her rivals to succeed her.

Asked who would “make the best Prime Minister”, 16 per cent named Boris Johnson, while both Mr Hammond and David Davis, the Brexit Secretary, achieve only a miserable 5 per cent. THE INDEPENDENT



Theresa May with her husband, Philip, on holiday in Desenzano del Garda, Italy GETTY

CONSERVATIVES

Rees-Mogg denies aspiring to replace May as PM

Jacob Rees-Mogg has denied suggestions he could take over as leader of the Conservatives, after a friend said he had revealed his ambitions at a private lunch.

The Tory MP (*inset*), who has enjoyed a growing public profile, is reported to be “sounding out” allies about a possible leadership bid. Last week, Mr Rees-Mogg was named as the

second-most popular choice to succeed Mrs May in a poll of party members by ConservativeHome.

The MP for North East Somerset also has the backing of a grassroots movement nicknamed “Moggmentum”, with backers seeking to portray him as

a right-wing Jeremy Corbyn.

Despite previously claiming he could never be a “serious” candidate for Prime Minister, Mr Rees-Mogg reportedly told a friend he would like to throw his hat in the ring. Professor Ted Malloch told *The Mail on Sunday*: “He did not mean now, but at some point in the future.”



i Conservative MP Anna Soubry has threatened to quit the party if it pursues a hard Brexit. “The country must always come before party,” she wrote in the *Mail on Sunday*.

EUROPE

Ministers to outline ‘detailed’ plans

By Chris Green

Britain's new relationship with the EU will be outlined in detail for the first time this week, as the Government publishes a series of documents preparing the way for Brexit.

After a year of behind-the-scenes work in Whitehall, ministers will finally state a formal position on what will happen to the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic after the UK leaves the EU.

Other strategy papers set to be published by the Department for Exiting the European Union (DexEU) will set out policies on customs arrangements, the availability of goods and access to official documents.

The document on the Northern Ireland border is expected to stick



David Davis said the papers were ‘an important next step’ in negotiations

to Britain's current plan to use smart technology and spot checks to police the flow of goods between the two countries after 2019.

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DIPLOMACY

Corbyn urges leaders to wind down rhetoric on Korea

By Alexander Britton

Jeremy Corbyn has called on the US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un to “wind down the war of rhetoric”.

Mr Trump has threatened to rain “fire and fury” on the Communist state after Pyongyang said it was “carefully examining” a plan to hit Guam with missiles.

The Prime Minister Theresa

May has been urged by Mr Corbyn not to commit any of Britain's armed forces to military action in the Korea crisis.

Writing in the *Sunday Mirror*, Mr Corbyn (*inset*) said: “Trump and Kim must wind down the war of rhetoric, as the German Chancellor Angela Merkel has demanded. The risks of an unintended escalation



into full-blown conflict are too great for the whole world. We cannot play fast and loose with nuclear weapons and nuclear threats. Our government must press for measured responses.” He said any future Labour government would be committed to remove nuclear weapons from the world.

BREXIT

Davis frustrated as transition talk divides Cabinet

By Scott Macnab

Brexit Secretary David Davis has voiced frustration at the changing position of Cabinet colleagues on Britain's exit from the European Union and revealed that a newspaper article written jointly by the Chancellor and the Trade Secretary was not “cleared” with him.

The article by Philip Hammond and Liam Fox in *The Sunday Telegraph* pledged the post-Brexit transition period would be “time-limited”. But Mr Davis said the transition could vary between sectors and would be “driven by practicalities” rather than ideology or timing.

The Brexit Secretary was speaking in Edinburgh as the first guest at Alex Salmond's Edinburgh festival fringe show yesterday. Alluding to the newspaper article, the former SNP leader asked whether it had been cleared by Mr Davis. He replied: “Not as I remember, no.”

The Brexit Secretary said he had cautioned against using phrases like “transition” period following the formal departure from the EU because “that means something different to absolutely everyone” involved in the process. “Including members of the Cabinet?” Mr Salmond interjected. Mr Davis replied: “Sometimes on different days.”

Asked if the Cabinet was “fully united” on Brexit, Mr Davis gave a long pause, prompting laughter from the Edinburgh crowd. “Well we're all captives – the answer is

i Philip Hammond and Liam Fox wrote: “We are clear that during this period the UK will be outside the customs union and will be a ‘third country’, not a party to EU treaties.”



Philip Hammond and Liam Fox said a transition would be ‘time-limited’

yes,” he responded to more laughter.

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier initially hinted the post-Brexit transition period could last up to a decade, Mr Davis also revealed, after the formal “divorce” is finalised in March 2019.

Mr Davis insisted this was “never going to fly”, but made it clear the timing of the implementation would be driven by practicalities.

“It will differ with different things,” he insisted. “Much of this will be driven not by ideology, but by practicalities. When you get the customs system in place, what you do about financial services and so on. That's why the implementation period comes into play with different people in different ways.”

Ministers are prioritising the customs union because this will need reciprocal work in other European countries, but other areas like financial services will need a lengthier period “to make any adjustments”.

Mr Davis added: “It may well vary by sector. What will help the financial sector of Edinburgh? What will make sure it doesn't take any hits?”

LABOUR

Miliband calls for MPs to resist ‘self-harm’ of Brexit

By Gavin Cordon

Former foreign secretary David Miliband has issued a call for politicians on all sides to fight against the “worst consequences” of last year's vote for Britain to leave the EU.

The Labour ex-cabinet minister (*inset*) called the outcome of the 2016 vote an “unparalleled act of economic self-harm”.

Writing in *The Observer* yesterday, he said the country should get to vote on any Brexit deal in a second referendum with a choice between remaining in the EU and the negotiated alternative.



“People say we must respect the referendum. We should. But democracy did not end on June 23 2016. The referendum will be no excuse if the country is driven off a cliff,” he wrote. “MPs are there to exercise judgment. Delegating to Theresa May and David Davis, never mind Boris Johnson and Liam Fox, the settlement of a workable alternative to EU membership is a delusion, not just an abdication.”

Mr Miliband stopped short of following former Tory aide James Chapman in calling for pro-Remain MPs to form a new political party.



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